

CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC CSE 2026



**DAILY CURRENT
AFFAIRS NOTES**

BY MUDIT JAIN
Ex IRS, Ex IPS



Centre's green panel gives its nod to Stage 2 Dulhasti hydel power project in J&K

- A panel under the Ministry of Environment has approved the 260-megawatt Dulhasti Stage 2 hydropower project on the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar.
- The clearance comes against the backdrop of India suspending the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack.
- When the Indus Water Treaty was in force, Pakistan had rights over the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers, and India over the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej.
- With the treaty now in abeyance, the Centre is pushing ahead with several hydroelectric projects in the Indus basin, such as Sawalkote, Ratle, Bursar, Pakal Dul, Kwar, Kiru, and Kirthai I and II.
- Dulhasti Stage 2 is an extension of the 390-MW Dulhasti Stage I hydroelectric project (Dulhasti Power Station).
- The Dulhasti Power Station has been successfully operating since 2007 by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited.

Rajasthan expedites installation of rooftop solar power plants

- Installation of rooftop solar power plants is being expedited in Rajasthan under the revamped distribution sector scheme (RDSS) to reduce transmission and distribution losses and improve power supply quality.
- Fixing meters on transformers has also been taken up rigorously under the RDSS.
- The Centre's nodal agency for RDSS is the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC).
- Aggregate technical and commercial losses had decreased from 17.49% in 2021-22 prior to the sanction of RDSS works to 14.26% in 2024-25.
- The RDSS is aimed at modernising power distribution and making it more efficient and financially stable, with focus on smart metering, infrastructure upgrades and reforms, while funding is linked to performance targets.

How India has managed to weave 'RCEP minus China'

- India is in a position to reap the benefits such a grouping would have provided, without exposing itself to the risks. This strategy has given India market access without surrendering tariff control to China.
- The RCEP countries are the 10 ASEAN members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam), Australia, China, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.
- The fear was this would provide China virtually duty-free access to the Indian market.
- 'RCEP minus China' strategy is a far superior one to joining RCEP itself.
- India and China are currently signatories to the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), which is a preferential trade pact that provides lower tariffs on a few items rather than an FTA, which typically lowers most tariffs to zero. Joining RCEP would have even been worse for India than signing a direct FTA with China.
- A bilateral deal with China would allow India to exclude sensitive sectors and pace liberalisation. RCEP's integrated structure would have diluted safeguards and enabled indirect entry of Chinese goods via other members.

How India's crude oil import basket has undergone change over years

- Historically, energy security for the world's third-largest oil consumer India has been about navigating the prevailing geopolitics whilst ensuring a positive economics for purchase of crude oil.
- From Saudi Arabia accounting for two-thirds of oil imports, to Russia emerging as the major supplier, New Delhi's crude oil basket has seen multiple policy shifts over the years.
- Before 2005, over 70% of the crude oil came from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and UAE. From 2005 to 2015, crude oil supplies broadened to include Nigeria and Angola in Africa and Venezuela in South America.
- In 2010, the U.N. Security Council sanctioned Iran to stop them from acquiring weapons. Iran's share in India's crude basket dropped to 6.2% in 2015-16. Sanctions on Iran were lifted in 2016. In later years, Tehran's share in India's oil imports fell to a little over 10%.
- Russia accounted for less than 2% of India's crude oil imports in 2021-22. This jumped to 21.6% in 2022-23. Russia's share further went up to 35.9% in 2023-24. It stood at 35.8% in 2024-25. At present, oil from Moscow accounts for one-third of the overall crude import basket.

Twenty-first century solutions to snake bites

- Snake venoms generally cause three types of damage: blood disorders, muscle paralysis, and tissue death.
- Viper bites commonly cause blood-related disorders, while elapid snakes (like cobras) typically trigger nerve-related paralysis.

- A **standard antivenom** has been designed against the venom of India's '**Big Four**' species: **spectacled cobra**, **common krait**, **Russell's viper**, and **saw-scaled viper**. **Venom from these snakes** is needed for making this antivenom.
- Most of India's requirement of **snake venom** is met by snakes captured in **paddy fields** and **scrublands of Tamil Nadu** by tribals of the **Irula Snake Catcher's Industrial Co-operative Society**.
- A **cocktail of venoms** from the **four species** is injected into **horses** in **non-lethal doses**, and the animals are **hyper-immunised** by repeated injections. **Horses are chosen** because they are **large animals** and are **easy to handle**. Their **immune system reacts**, producing **antibodies in large quantities**.
- When ready, **blood is drawn** from the horses. **Plasma containing the antibodies** is processed to isolate **toxin-binding antibody fragments**, which are then **tested, freeze-dried, and distributed in vials**. This **method has been in practice since the 1950s**.
- The **camel family** was chosen because it has **unusual antibodies** that yield small, stable fragments called **nanobodies**.

Is the 'health for all' campaign on track?

- India has been a **beneficiary of PEPFAR (U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief)** and **USAID**, as funds **suddenly dried up** for certain **key health intervention projects** in the fields of **HIV/AIDS, population services** and **maternal and child health**.
- **India's health budget** has remained **below 2% of the GDP**. The **National Health Policy** itself set a **target of 2.5% of GDP**.
- **WHO's recent GLASS report** noted that **one in three people** who had **bacterial infections in India** bore **resistant organisms**, against **one in six globally**.
- For India, the report flagged **high resistance rates to major antibiotics**, especially in **serious infections** caused by **E.coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae, and Staphylococcus aureus**, particularly in **hospital ICUs**.
- The **challenging factors** that aggravate **AMR** are **widespread over-the-counter antibiotic access, self-medication, incomplete courses, environmental contamination, and uneven enforcement of regulations**.
- **Kerala is the only State** where **stewardship in AMR** has led to an **actual lowering of AMR levels in the community**. Other States need to **catch up**, even as they roll out the **second iteration of the National Plan of Action on Antimicrobial Resistance** introduced **this year**.